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NON-SOLUTION SOLUTIONS TO ENDING HOMELESSNESS



Photo by Ted McGrath. My Home is Where My Carts Are.

WHAT ISN'T WORKING AND WHY

A report by the nine organizations of the Western Regional Advocacy Project: [Denver Homeless Out Loud](#), [Los Angeles Community Action Network](#), [St. Mary's Center](#), [Street Spirit](#), [San Francisco Coalition on Homelessness](#), [Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee](#), [Street Roots](#), [Sisters of the Road](#) and [Right2Survive](#).

It is easy to forget that homelessness was supposed to be temporary. As homeless states of emergency continue to pop up all over the U.S., as ten-year plans to end homelessness continue to expire and get renamed, and as evictions, displacements, and the numbers of community members living on the streets continue to increase, homelessness becomes more and more entrenched as a permanent phenomenon.

Neoliberalism, which started in the 1980s in the U.S., is the current phase of capitalism. Neoliberal policies decimated federal public housing funding and created the contemporary homeless problem. It also has shifted our entire material reality by privatizing formerly public goods including public space, housing, and healthcare, expanding the prison system and criminalizing social behaviors, destroying the welfare state, and centralizing wealth for a small few while increasing poverty for most, amongst other hugely influential shifts.

Instead of addressing the structural reasons that are rooted in neoliberalism and have been forcing people out onto the streets for the past 30 years, the political discourse has continued to focus on how to manage the increasing population. These

harmful. While the intention to be helpful is great, the end result of being deceitful to the broader public and wasting millions and millions of dollars on these solutions is not. Many of the non-solution solutions listed in this article have positive sides that make some people's lives easier. Although this is great, it does not make it an actual solution towards ending homelessness. The solutions that are most helpful to homeless people actually come from homeless people themselves, foster self-determination for everyone, stress the need for housing, and do not involve the police at any step of the project.

Because Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) is a coalition of nine organizations working for poor and homeless people's rights across cities in three different states, we often come in contact with these non-solution solutions. At times, we engage with the non-solution solutions that are shortsighted but helpful to a small number of people, but we never engage with the solutions that are directly harmful to people living on the streets. In general, we tend to be critical of all these non-solution solutions because we strive for alternatives that actually address the needs of homeless people and move towards systematically eliminating the

in public space (sitting, lying, sleeping, resting, eating, etc.). Homeless people are told to move along, ticketed and/or arrested with the goal of removing them from public space.

Under the guise of working for the public good, city politicians are quick to jump on criminalizing everything they possible can. This means criminalizing people for camping when they have nowhere else to protect themselves from the elements. It also means criminalizing people simply for possessing "camping paraphernalia" with the intent to use.

Under the guise of public health, cities and police departments are sweeping encampments and displacing people from the place where they live, and the community they live with. Often, these sweeps involve confiscation of people's property by claiming that it is "garbage." Other strategies include closing public restrooms, turning off public water sources, and denying people the right to wash themselves or their things. More restrictions on how many belongings homeless people can have include limiting belongings to two square feet or making it illegal to store property in public space.

Under the guise of public safety, poor and homeless people are funneled into local county jails and state prisons. Most often this happens because people are given bench warrants, or warrants issued by a judge, for accruing many fines for existing while poor in public. For example, these fines can be accrued by being unable to pay for public transportation and by receiving quality of life citations (which, as previously stated, can include sleeping, eating, or sitting in public spaces). Others are locked up in county jails for simply not having the money to pay bail. This creates a sense of safety for wealthy people, but is a direct threat to poor people's safety, as jails and prisons are deeply unsafe for everyone inside.

All of these strategies for criminalizing homeless people's existence are meant to make it harder for people with wealth to see homelessness. They do nothing to give people access to housing, to services that people want, or to self-determination. In fact, criminalizing existence entrenches people in poverty and creates more and more obstacles for people trying to get off the streets.

2) COLLABORATING WITH BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS: GENTRIFYING CITIES ONE NEIGHBORHOOD AT A TIME

Another solution that excites the minds of business and property owners is to collaborate with the police through Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to "address homelessness" and gentrify neighborhoods. While it seems obvious that business owners, property owners, police, and BIDs are not in an appropriate position to say what homeless people need, this does not stop them from doing so and doing so very loudly.

Business Improvement Districts are the gentrification station. They are deeply non-democratic public-private enti-



Artwork by Deanna Tisone. "No Parking."

ties. BIDs were created to give an opportunity for business owners to charge additional fees to property owners in a specific area to supplement parking infrastructure and lighting maintenance. Nowadays, BIDs charge additional fees to a specific area to fund sanitation services, private security, more police, and many anti-homeless initiatives. All of these BID services are meant to make business districts more appealing to wealthy gentrifiers at the expense of the lives of long-term, low-income residents and homeless neighbors.

BIDs are known to help solve the homeless problem by hiring poor and homeless people as security guards to police other poor and homeless people. They engage in lobbying and public policy in favor of new criminalization efforts and lobby against homeless people fighting criminalization. Sometimes they fund homeless services, but this is largely to maintain some amount of control over what those services can do. They also participate in, collaborate with, and often initiate sweeps of homeless encampments in addition to supporting the enforcement of anti-homeless ordinances including panhandling, vagrancy, and anti-transient ordinances.

3) CITY-SANCTIONED ENCAMPMENTS THAT DENY SELF-DETERMINATION - AN INNOVATIVE IDEA IN SURVEILLANCE AND POLICING

Of course, one of the most obvious non-solution solutions is the shelter system. Shelters were created and were effective as an emergency option for people on the streets. They were never intended to be used as a long-term solution to give people shelter. Shelters were also absolutely never meant to become a permanent tier of housing because are not actual housing. The shelter system is not a viable or safe solution for many homeless people, but that does not stop politicians from promoting them as if they are a real solution.

An innovative idea that has been circulating for years but has recently seen a reinvestment is the idea of creating city-sanctioned encampment shelters. These initiatives create legal en-

campments in large abandoned areas—usually far away from city centers—that are run by the city or a non-profit, and function like outdoor shelters. This is different from encampments that have gained legal exemption from cities, but are run by and for their residents, and don't involve criminalizing, surveying, or policing people.

The formation of encampments does not represent an end to homelessness. Rather, they are an indication of a critical need to create more effective, local systems for responding to homelessness. Official strategies should focus on connecting people to permanent long-term housing solutions and not creating and operating city-run encampments. At the very least, official strategies should honor the creative ways that homeless people are housing themselves and their communities, such as building tiny homes and other structures, in response to the lack of housing.

People sleeping in encampments are diverse, and interventions must address a range of needs, challenges, and goals. The forced dispersal of encampments is not an appropriate solution, though city-sanctioned encampments have been used as a justification for increased police presence and sweeps of homeless camps by entrenching the idea of non-city sanctioned encampments as an illegal public safety and health concern. This forces the constant packing up and moving of elders, disabled people, and physically injured individuals sleeping in encampments, while ignoring reasons why people would choose a non-city sanctioned encampment over a city-sanctioned one. A person's refusal to enter a city-sanctioned encampment can also be used to justify the criminalization and/or arrest of that person.

Homeless people who live in encampments use many strategies to keep themselves and their communities safe. One of these strategies involves petitioning the City for code waivers, exemptions, or pushing for them to simply ignore that the encampments exist. These solutions are useful so long as they are not used by cities to pit homeless people



Artwork by Deanna Tisone. "Grocery Cart."

management tools include using police to criminalize people for existing in public, creating a multi-billion dollar industry to "help" homeless people, and continually cooking up new non-solution solutions to end homelessness.

In the rush to appear to be doing something about the "homeless problem," politicians often funnel large amounts of money into projects that do little or nothing to change the material conditions of the lives of homeless people, or are simply

possibility that anyone would be forced to become homeless.

The following is an abridged list of WRAP's "favorite" non-solution solutions to ensure that the status quo of homelessness remains:

1) CRIMINALIZING EXISTENCE: COUNTY JAILS AND STATE PRISONS INSTEAD OF HOUSING

The favorite go-to response from cities across the country is to force homeless people out of public space by criminalizing basic life-sustaining activities

TECH TAX COULD SEE VERSION 2.0 AT POLLS

TJ JOHNSTON

The day after his proposed “tech tax” ballot measure was killed in the Board of Supervisors Budget Committee, Supervisor Eric Mar said that San Francisco voters could bring it back to life.

“Long live the ‘fair share’ tech tax,” he said at a press conference on August 2. “It’s not dead. The fight has just begun.”

The committee blocked the measure from discussion by the full board on a 2–1 vote. The proposed measure for the November ballot would have called for a 1.5 percent payroll tax from San Francisco-based tech companies over a four-year period, if city voters approve. Up to \$140 million could have filled the City’s coffers, funding affordable housing and homeless service programs.

The tax was seen as a way to mitigate what social justice activists say are the damaging effects of runaway gentrification that drive longtime residents and mom-and-pop businesses out of the city.

But at the legislative level, the measure hit a wall when committee chair Mark Farrell—who is also a venture capitalist—voiced his disapproval and voted against moving it forward, with Katy Tang joining. At the August 1 committee hearing, he said the tech industry was being used as a scapegoat.

But supporters of the measure won’t let the panel’s vote deter them, said Feng Kung, lead organizer from the local chapter of Jobs with Justice.

“We refuse to let [Farrell] and the tech interests he favors to kill the spirit and the very heart of the city,” he said the following day. “Yesterday, they thought they killed our spirit. Today, we declare that we’re going to fight on.”

For years, that battle has been fought on a changing landscape. Affordable housing advocates say that tax breaks given to city-based tech companies are partly responsible for a migration of new employees. This influx also



brought on a swelling tide of displacement, according to the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project. Using City data, the mapping project found substantial yearly increases in no-fault evictions, or evictions that are caused not by a breach in the lease, but by the nonrenewal of a lease by the landlord after it has expired: From 2011 to 2012, evictions rose 42 percent, and from 2012 to 2013, the increase rate was 57 percent. Each year, 69 percent of these evictions occurred within four blocks of tech shuttle bus routes.

Activists say that the City hasn’t taken into account how housing has been affected in the economic boom. Mar and Kung took issue with opponents’ emphasis on the proposal’s effect on employment over housing. Ted Egan, chief economist in the City Con-

troller’s Office, reported that implementing the tax would cost 870 jobs over a 20-year period. Kung said that the City’s focus is misplaced.

“The [City Controller] was so focused on the job impact, which turned out to be negligible,” he said. “It did not address any question on how do tech corporations impact the housing market.”

Mar asked for an independent study on such impacts, as well as the formation of a working group including

members of community-based organizations and tech companies.

A signature-gathering campaign to put it on the ballot is also likely, Kung said, but the target date—2017 or 2018—is not yet clear.

“The crisis is now,” Kung said. “We feel we need the accountability right now.”

City law requires that a petition-driven ordinance must have a number of signatures equalling a percentage of votes cast in the previous mayoral

election to waive the filing fee. In a regularly scheduled election—the City’s next one after this November is in June 2018—that would be 5 percent, or 9,485 signatures. But if a special election is requested before then, the threshold for qualifying measures is raised to 10 percent, or 18,970 signatures.

If the measure makes the ballot, it would require a two-thirds vote to pass if the money from the tax is directed towards a special purpose. ■



STREET FATIGUE: TRAUMATIZED WITHOUT A ROOF

CHRIS B.

He stands tall even when he walks with a cane. He doesn't look like Charlie Sheen or Sylvester Stallone, but he's a marine. He is walking around the Mission, waiting for a bed in the Navigation Center. He's frustrated be-

Before this short buzzword came around in the 80s and psychiatric diagnostic manuals slowly crept into the mainstream, there were already records of a prolongation of the "shock" caused by a traumatic event. Shell-shocked soldiers were initially registered around the First World

view, traumatized individuals can be, if translated literally, seen as sleepwalkers, people who are stuck in between the real-world and a dream-world after a stressful enough situation. And to anyone who experiences PTSD or any other trauma-related issue, that means a really bad dream.

belt around them that is tight, that won't let them move, won't let them breathe." She says that people with a history of psychological trauma have "twice the chance of recurrent depression than the rest of the population."

Without an established sense of self, a lack of ability

He adds, "I didn't know when I was little, but my grandfather was a pimp. I don't know how they called it back then, but he stopped all that when he got married to my grandmother." He has six brothers and six sisters.

A research by the Boston University called "Homeless-



Photo by Emon Ramon. Life on Street.

cause of a problem that came up with his V.A. payment.

"I have seen it all, I have done it all," and says that his name is Joe A. V-Gomez. He lives on these streets, and is one of almost every 100 people in San Francisco who doesn't have the luck to live under a roof. Cynics might say that each one of those living without housing security would say the same thing just to hustle, that everyone says they have "seen it all." However, empirical data shows that what Joe is referring to is highly likely to be true. Joe suffers from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD.

WHEN SEEING IT ALL IS SEEING TOO MUCH

Almost two-thirds of the population in this country will suffer at least one experience so stressful that it qualifies as traumatic. Of those, it is estimated that 30 percent will develop PTSD, a mood disorder that can greatly affect the ability of a person to go on with their lives the way in which they did before the trauma happened.

War, a reference to those who had experienced some kind of "psychic stun" from the explosion of artillery shells. A lack of character or weak biological traits were usually the explanations as to why some individuals became shell-shocked while others were not. However, before the days of WWI, it was usually simply referred to as combat fatigue. Stallone probably felt pretty tired after playing the role of Rambo, but he would have been unlikely to get combat fatigue from it. Or shell-shock. Or PTSD. He might, though, for other reasons.

The word trauma comes from the German word for dream, "Traum," which shines a light into the meaning and reasons for this broader sense of understanding psychological problems due to severe stress. According to some schools of psychological thought (There are several and often contradicting opinions in the mental health system.), the conscious mind is a reflection of a subconscious one that manifests itself in dreams. With this point of

People who have endured traumatic experiences share some common symptoms, such as episodes of flashbacks, in which they relive vivid sensations, feelings, or thoughts that they had during the triggering event. They can also feel guilt, shame, extremely disturbing nightmares, mistrust, and hyper-awareness. They can feel that they are always "on the edge."

Not everyone who suffers from PTSD has necessarily experienced combat. A car crash can be a very traumatic experience. "I've been shot three different times," says Joe, both on and off duty (Does it really matter?). That qualifies as a traumatic experience.

Psychiatric nurse Cara Hoepner has worked with the California Department of Rehabilitation in San Francisco. She focuses her practice on trauma. She defines it as "anything that disrupts the ability to develop in a person." She considers that development is learning the sense of self, the starting ground that will lead to a profession and a fulfilling life. For her, trauma is "like a

to set limits and boundaries, the likelihood of recurrent depression and "intrusive thoughts that they didn't ask for," as Cara states, can a person be driven into homelessness?

"Imagine you're one paycheck away from hitting the streets and you have severe depression," she answers.

"Absolutely, homelessness and trauma are inextricably linked. Traumatic experiences, particularly in early childhood, are often a contributing factor in homelessness. And the experience of homelessness is itself a form of trauma" adds former faculty member of Saybrook University and Psychological Doctor Doris Bersing.

"I was premature, you know?" says Joe. "2.3 pounds when I was born. My twin brother..." and he stops for a few seconds before continuing. "So I've been living two lives all of my life. I don't know if you understand".

Joe's father was from Guam and a veteran of the Korean War. His mother was "half-Spanish, half-Italian."

ness as Psychological Trauma" states that poverty and exposure to violence, harassment, and stigmatization can be in itself a reason not only for homelessness, but also psychological trauma. The relationship goes both ways, trauma and homelessness.

"When people ask me where I come from I say: from my mother and my father. Don't we all? But yeah, I was born in Oakland," explains Joe. He stops for a few seconds before saying, "My mother was murdered there in 2011. My grandfather, the Italian, had ties with the Mafia." A fellow veteran passes by and says to him loudly, "Keep sharp marine, Oorah!" He answers with the same war cry.

A REVOLVING DOOR AND THE WAY HOME

When asked for solutions in San Francisco for Joe and hundreds more living in homelessness and serious mental illness, Doris says, "The revolving door of poverty, homelessness, and sometimes violence, and po-

NON-SOLUTIONS

FROM PAGE 4
against each other by naming some people's encampments legal while others as illegal. They are also helpful as long as they do not increase the criminalization of these communities. Cities should not be congratulated for doing the most basic work of allowing people to sleep and rest without being criminalized, but should be celebrated when they invest in long-term housing that meets the needs of homeless people in their neighborhoods.

4) HOMELESS COURTS: USING THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM TO FIGHT PROBLEMS CREATED BY THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM

As was mentioned earlier, criminalization is not a solution to homelessness. In response to this, commonly, there is a push for other criminal legal approaches to address homelessness, like homeless courts. The criminal legal system exacerbates problems for homeless people in all of its iterations and should not be used as a solution.

Homeless courts were created as a way to address homeless issues outside of the regular court system. Similar to mental health courts, these courts were created because the "regular" court systems has become overwhelmed with Status Crime Offenses.

Homeless courts do not lessen or change the quality of life charges that homeless people are facing. Instead, they create a special court to address the so-called crimes of engaging in basic life-sustaining activities while homeless. Homeless courts further institutionalize homelessness and entrench homelessness in the criminal legal system. These courts do help people access housing services—but only if they have pleaded guilty. Pleading guilty also often forces people into services that they may not want or need, including drug treatment and case management.

People should not need to be arrested to access services. People should not be arrested for quality of life charges. Quality of life charges are violent, racist, classist, and should not exist. The criminal legal system is a violent system based on racism, classism, and other oppression, and cannot properly address homelessness.

5) OUTREACH: A GREAT WAY TO BEEF UP YOUR GRANT PROPOSAL

Perhaps the most overused non-solution solution to homelessness is outreach. Outreach can actually be a useful tool in gathering information and creating a connection between people. There are plenty of ways that people are doing outreach that supports real solutions towards ending homelessness. At its best, outreach provides food, blankets, medical supplies, harm reduction materials, access to showers, and cop watching to people living on the streets. Unfortunately, much of this type of outreach has been criminalized and de-funded.

Outreach can also be used to perpetuate the myth that people are on the streets and other public spaces because

they don't know where to go for help or are just too dysfunctional to get there. Local, state and federal governments, BIDs, health departments, police, and community organizations all conduct street outreach. At its worst, this outreach is done to "look good" as a media stunt, to aid the displacement of people from encampments with threats of police sweeps, or simply to justify increases to funding for organizations coordinating the outreach.

Often, outreach is a practice of futility. When all the service providers, treatment centers, and housing have massive waitlists, doing outreach to tell people that there is nothing available for them besides a waitlist is not particularly helpful. While new innovative outreach programs

life-skills training. While these services are helpful for some, for most they do nothing at all or are directly harmful.

Case managers are assigned to homeless people to provide emotional support and help link people with services that they need. As mentioned earlier, the most helpful services like long-term permanent housing are consistently unavailable. While politicians claim that homeless people are service resistant, the reality is that most services are resisted because they offer nothing particularly helpful.

Life-skills trainings are given at many of these service provision non-profits. These trainings are often mandatory and include literacy, numeracy, budgeting, keeping appointments, contacting services,

COORDINATED ENTRY SYSTEMS, VULNERABILITY INDEXES: THE MANY WAYS TO LINK HOMELESS PEOPLE UP WITH HOUSING THAT DOESN'T EXIST

Under neoliberalism, there are many names for the same thing to make it appear as though the idea is a new or useful one. These solutions are the least harmful of all solutions on this list. However, they are included because of how much money they waste on being marginally helpful and mostly useless.

There is a push for new Navigation Centers across the Bay Area in California. Navigation Centers are large centers where homeless people can come to be "navigated" to services in the city. This \$3 million solution is meant to create a one-stop shop

out of town or they are pushed back onto the streets.

A similar project in Los Angeles, the Coordinated Entry System (CES), attempts to bring services together in one place for homeless people to access. The CES involves extensive outreach and recruitment of homeless people. Unfortunately, similar to San Francisco, these methods are not particularly helpful because there is no housing to coordinate or to be made accessible to people living on the streets. The CES measures their success by how many thousands of people are on waitlists for housing, but it can take years for people to have any movement on those wait lists.

In Sacramento, the Common Cents program is another project to coordinate services. Common Cents is specifically interested in addressing the needs of homeless people at the highest risk of premature death. They use a vulnerability index to assess severity of need for housing.

While prioritizing people in the most dire need is a great approach, the reality is that there is not enough housing for even those people. There are over 1,000 people on the waiting list because there is no housing available. This approach also does not address the fact that living on the streets creates a high risk for premature death for all people. People need adequate housing in order to survive. Housing is a human right and everyone in this country, one of the wealthiest countries in the world, should have access to housing that they can afford.

All of these solutions, almost identical to each other in different cities in the West Coast, merely bring together the services that exist. The problem is that there is not enough housing. These solutions will continue to not address the needs of people living on the streets until there is actually enough housing built in these cities.

Homelessness will end when everyone has a house to live in and can access their basic needs like eating, sleeping, resting, using the bathroom, and having contact with other humans. This is not an idealistic or unattainable goal. There is enough money in this country to ensure that everyone has a house. After all, we have no problem funding home ownership for wealthier people, and we have no problem building luxury condos in urban cities across the U.S. that are only accessible to the most wealthy. Ending homelessness is a problem of political will and not economics.

We cannot continue to allow these non-solution solutions to pop up in cities across the U.S. We need housing and we need it now. Homelessness has been a crisis for 30 years. People living on the streets all over the U.S. are experiencing premature death at disturbingly high rates for lacking access to the most basic human things. Poor communities are under attack. The time to be bold and invest in a world where we can all thrive is now.

The first step is incredibly simple: Build housing for every person to live in and abandon the non-solution solutions immediately. ■



Artwork by Deanna Tisone. "Sad Guy Underpass."

pop up periodically in cities and towns all over the U.S. with different uniforms, different people, and different names—the end result of nothing changing for homeless people remains the same.

6) CASE MANAGEMENT, LIFE-SKILLS TRAINING, AND THE HOMELESS INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

An entire industry has been created to "help" homeless people over the past 30 years. This special arm of the non-profit industrial complex is created to come up with new best practices, new experts, and new projects to funnel money into. Nowadays, most homeless service providers are required to include case management and

dealing with bills, interpersonal communication, dealing with disputes, self-confidence, building social network skills, etc. While these trainings on how to better participate in capitalism are helpful to some, many find this to be a deeply condescending and harmful practice.

The thing that homeless people need most is a home. Homeless people often have very little in common with each other besides not having a permanent house to live in. Unless the life-skills trainings are about building housing and non-profits are purchasing land for people to put these houses—they are going to continue to be mostly irrelevant.

7) NAVIGATION CENTERS,

where people can access all of the services in the city at one place without having to figure out where all of the services are and what they do on their own. This is not a bad idea. Services in large urban cities can be overwhelming and complicated to navigate.

The problem with the Navigation Center model is that it is not particularly successful in linking homeless people with long-term permanent housing because there is no housing to be linked up with. In San Francisco, there is a small number of temporary shelter beds for people in the Navigation Center. The majority of people who access the Navigation Center receive temporary housing, a bus ticket

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION: WASTE OF MONEY OR PERFECT INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE?

VLAD K.

Results from last year’s English Football Premier League tournament was shocking for everybody—for experts, pools, and fans alike. Leicester City, a team whose annual budget would not still not be sufficient to trade one soccer star and whose chances were estimated by most optimistic prognoses as 1 to 5000, became the champion of the world’s most expensive sports competition. In the course of the intense tournament, this “village club” crushed the richest star-stuffed arsenal: Manchester United, Chelsea, and Liverpool. Leicester City made history and experts will discuss for decades how it happened, but one explanation is clear—Leicester spent its meager budget to make a balanced team by eliminating any weak links.

I decided to start with this story not because of the Olympic games in Rio, but because I was influenced by the incredibly talented Malcolm Gladwell’s podcast “Revisionist History.” Though clearly every model is approximate, Malcolm Gladwell says that in certain sense, comparing human society with a soccer team is helpful. Unlike in basketball, in soccer, moving the ball from one end of the field to

another would require involvement of at least five to six players, because no superhero faced by two to three defenders of the opposite team will be able to outplay them. Soccer’s strategy is built on team spirit and passing the ball to others in the best situations. No matter how beautiful and precise the first five passes are, if sixth player loses the ball, you can forget about the virtuous feints of the previous team members.

Malcolm Gladwell mentions the “soccer model” while talking about the tradition of American philanthropists donating money to Harvard, Stanford, and Yale, when money is most desperately needed in the weakest social link: public schools. But giving money to public schools, like donating money for homeless people, is traditionally seen as a stupid, wasteful act.

We must also consider the marginalized part of the population that is deemed as “non-functional or non-contributing members of society,” whereby our neighbors become outcasts. However, only recently have we begun to realize the whole impact of social stress on functioning and emotional health. According to recent research, these factors are inseparably connected.

Duke University professor Jane Costello, who studied Cherokee people benefitting from the popularity of a casino built on their land, found that behavioral problems among children who had been lifted out of poverty went down 40 percent. According to Rutger Bergman’s “Why Do the Poor People Make Poor Decisions?”, juvenile crime rates among the Cherokee also declined, along with drug and alcohol use, while their school scores improved markedly. At school, the Cherokee kids were now on a par with the study’s non-tribal participants.

Another, even more revolutionary discovery, is that even such measurements of intellect as IQ, which until recently was believed to only decline with age and disease, was actually increasing among children no longer experiencing poverty. Psychologists believed that it was an impact of “relaxation” of the brain, which during the hardships and emotional impact of being underprivileged, was stuck in a dignity and survival mode. Genetics do play an important role, but in the past it was highly exaggerated, while social factors were considerably downplayed.

PREVENTION IS THE BEST INTERVENTION

Usually, the first thing that comes to mind when hearing the word “homeless” is a sick, dirty person unable to take care of him or herself. Our image of homelessness is related to an important problem—it is extremely difficult to keep dignity for an individual experiencing constant humiliation, sleep deprivation, malnutrition, and a lack of privacy. In Darwin’s perspective, our humanness is a thin veneer of a few centuries of the civilization over thousands and thousands of years as a part of nature. Everything which makes us human—dignity, kindness, culture, honesty, love of beauty—is very easily breakable and very hard to restore. This should make homelessness prevention a priority, which potentially can save tons of money by helping people who are about to lose home, which would require much less effort than rehabilitating “chronic” street dwellers.

But nobody was born broken. Explaining everything with drugs is a simplification and another means to justify privilege. Along with people with mental health problems (about 30 percent), veterans (10 percent), so-called “chronically” homeless (18 percent) and homeless youth, people with addictions make up a considerable portion of home-

less population. Yet, despite a lack of research, it is obvious that their number are not so big that we can make a direct connection and explain homelessness by drugs. Quite commonly, it is just opposite: After finding themselves on the street, people realize that the only way to alleviate pain and remain functional is by using drugs, and I personally heard from several people that they stopped using drugs the moment they got their own keys. Social programs targeting people who are about to lose housing would be best possible investment into the future.

Not every homeless individual has the potential of becoming an over-achiever, but everybody’s situation could be improved for their own benefit and the benefit of all of society. Recently, electronic pages of social media were exploding with revelations from people who could not tolerate the situation with homeless people in San Francisco. This is a normal human reaction: Many people feel uncomfortable seeing the suffering of homeless people around us. So far, some representatives of City administration rush to kill any initiative without offering any other solution, so homelessness remains the problem of all of us which somebody else has to resolve. ■

FAMILY APPRECIATION DAY

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS, SRO FAMILIES UNITED COLLABORATIVE CELEBRATE VICTORIES



On September 16th over 150 volunteers and families from Coalition on Homelessness and the SRO Families United Collaborative had a day of fun together on Lindley Meadow. We celebrated our victories in our legit demand for affordable housing for homeless families in San Francisco. These victories include the release of Road Map to End Family Homelessness, the release of the 2015 SRO Families Census Report, fighting the criminalization of those of us living on the streets, having the San Francisco Housing Authority open wait lists for homeless families, the graduation of over 30 families living in SROs that participated in the 2016 SRO Leadership Training.

Families from four neighborhoods: Chinatown, the Tenderloin, South of Market and the Mission enjoyed a day full of fun, children were running around, playing in the jumping houses, broke Donald Trump piñatas and were entertained by Jungle James and his reptiles. The event was as success in terms of promoting cross ethnic unity and celebrating our victories in our legit demand for safe and affordable housing for all San Franciscans.



SLEEP FATIGUE

FROM PAGE 4

lice mishandling [of brutality] undermines the outcomes for these families and children.”

Cara shares her own experience of losing her house and business due to severe depression caused by her own mental illness years before: “If it weren’t for my parents, I would have ended up in a single room occupancy hotel (SRO).” She thinks that such a circumstance could have led to the need to numb down the extreme conditions of violence, lack of privacy, and poverty, with drugs and alcohol.

In Utah, the nationwide famous Housing First project virtually eliminated homelessness in the state, reducing it by 91 percent. Housing First is giving people a safe home, subsidized by the state, and from thereon providing services so people can get back on their feet.

Cara is skeptical. “I’m wondering if the violence seen in SROs isn’t repeating there. And if it weren’t for rent-control, I couldn’t afford living in this city,” she says, even as the CEO of Bay Area Psychiatrics. She finishes by saying that with the rent prices of the city, Housing First might work

somewhere else, but not here.

Doris offers the perspective of palliative care: “They need stable support for families, require addressing issues related to mental health, domestic violence, and substance abuse in their lives, in addition to basic emergency needs and child care. Along with case management and prenatal and parenting programs. They should receive critical support services: mental health wellness, domestic violence services and referrals, child welfare, family unification, substance abuse treatment, child care services for clients, emergency needs, and police protection and integration.”

However, she also adds, “I would say it is the government [responsibility], federal mainly, to provide help and support for our veterans. It is as easy as building places to receive them, and helping them navigate the trauma, PTSD, and feelings of inadequacy they can experience.”

Joe is 53 years old. He has been living on the streets since 1995, when he got divorced. Every time he mentions his lost twin brother or mother, he looks up to the sky and says, “They went Home,” and smiles sincerely. ■

STREET SHEET STAFF

The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

Lisa-Marie Alatorre • Julia D’Antonio • Chris B
• Regina Bates • Katie Bernock • Paul Boden •
Miguel Carrera • Mikey Chapman • Kelley Cutler • Will Daley •
Lydia Ely • Matthew Gerring • Raúl Fernández-Berriozabel •
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E-MAIL STREETSHEET@COHSF.ORG

CALL (415) 346- 3740 ext. 309

VISIT OUR OFFICE AT 468 TURK ST
(between Larkin & Hyde)

SPEAK ON IT! [Homeless Speakers Bureau]

When: Thursday 8/25/16 @ 1pm
Where: Coalition on Homelessness
468 Turk Street between Hyde & Larkin

What: Often when policies or decisions are made on behalf of the homeless community, homeless voices are left out of the process. Often when stories about homelessness are written in local newspapers homeless voices are ignored or neglected.

With the belief that homeless folks should have a voice in decisions and policies that impact their lives, the Coalition On Homeless is establishing a Speakers Bureau to give voice to those experiencing homelessness.

One of the best ways people can gain understanding of what it’s like to experience something they have never been through is to hear from someone who has had that experience talk about it. The Homeless Speakers Bureau offers that opportunity.

Join us on August 25, 2016, at the Coalition On Homelessness at 1:00pm for our Homeless Speakers Bureau training. We will be serving lunch. Bring your Voice!

COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

The Street Sheet is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition’s work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: They bring their agenda to us. We then turn that agenda into powerful campaigns that are fleshed out at our work group meetings, where homeless people come together with their other community allies to win housing and human rights for all homeless and poor people.

WORKGROUP MEETINGS

AT 468 TURK STREET

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| HOUSING JUSTICE WORK GROUP | Every Tuesday at noon |
| HUMAN RIGHTS WORK GROUP | Every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m. |
| STREET SHEET ORIENTATION | Every Thursday at 10 a.m. |
| STREET SHEET DISTRIBUTION | Monday–Friday from 9 a.m.–12 noon |

To learn more about COH workgroup meetings, contact us at : 415-346-3740, or go at : www.cohsf.org

DONATE FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Donate to Community Thrift Store to support the homeless community. Please be sure to designate “Coalition on Homelessness, Account #205” as the beneficiary.

Hours 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Daily

Call Community Thrift Store at 415-861-4910 to ensure your donations will be accepted at the drop-off site on Sycamore Alley.

You can donate: clothing, leatherware, shoes, furniture, electronics, lamps, toys, bicycles, collectibles, books, magazines, artwork, housewares, music and moves, luggage, mirrors, jewelry and accessories, crutches, wheelchairs, and walkers.

All donations must be boxed or bagged.

SPECIAL THANKS

The staff and volunteers of the Coalition on Homelessness thank the following STREET SHEET. Your continued support has been vital in keeping the STREET SHEET on the streets since 1989.

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THE VIEW FROM THE STREET



“Concord”

Helping us to reflect on the daily life of our streets, photographers offer one picture that represents their personal take on urban life.

About the artist: The photographs of Hengki Lee are mysterious. What is real and what is technically processed stays a secret that he keeps. His images are transmitting feelings of dreams and the emotion they are giving are awakening curiosity. Trough his very personal style inspired from poetry, movies and books he reads, this young visual artist from Jakarta Indonesia, has been remarked by the visual community and featured in various international publications since he started to learn photography and visual art in 2009.

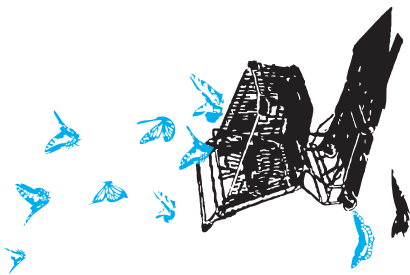
About the photo: In San Francisco, each of us will associate this image with a particular hill on a foggy day. While the silhouettes express a perfect moment of peace, something makes us wonder if the clouds are real, if the hills can be so smooth, and life so perfect ? ■

PHOTO: HENGKI LEE WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/HENGKILEEPHOTOGRAPHY

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